2014 has been a year of movement. In the most literal sense, we moved into the newly renovated Arthur R. Edington Education & Career Center. It was the single largest physical project in our history. In another sense we moved forward with a comprehensive new training model, serving 140 low-income individuals last year. Our graduates are now better prepared than ever to get and keep meaningful jobs.

The economic, social and environmental challenges facing our community require people and communities to move forward with innovative, effective solutions. That is why this year, we’re commemorating our progress with that theme.

Green Opportunities (GO) connects youth and adults from low-wealth neighborhoods to sustained employment opportunities that support families and improve community and environmental health.
FROM THE LEADERSHIP

It is with great pleasure and dedication that I greet you as the Interim Executive Director of Green Opportunities. GO is steadily moving forward with a bold community vision of jobs and justice for the Asheville area. We ask that you join us on that exciting journey.

Over the past six years, GO has grown, changed, and matured – much like the students we train and the community we serve. And, like our students, we are incredibly excited to be at the convergence of so much activity and opportunity.

GO’s new home in the Arthur R. Edington Center, literally and figuratively, places us in the middle of approximately $40 million of planned development and investment, from the River Arts District, to the Complete Streets program that will reinvigorate Livingston Street, to the changing face of the South Slope of downtown Asheville. GO’s high quality training programs continue to produce job-ready graduates, all positioned to capitalize on the jobs and careers these projects will generate and support.

Our annual report’s theme this year is “moving forward.” GO has always embodied that theme, and this year we’ve done so by focusing our programs and directly aligning them with a positive vision for what Asheville’s low-wealth communities could one day become. This intensive planning is also allowing us to do more with the resources we work so hard to generate.

GO is also moving forward in its relationships with a variety of dynamic community partners like the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, City of Asheville, and New Belgium Brewery. This important work positions us to provide more job opportunities and build more capacity in our communities through these vital, effective partnerships.

In the coming years, these programs and partnerships will play a critical role in promoting the changes required to support true economic mobility for those who experience barriers to employment and self-sufficiency.

This report demonstrates our continued effort in pursuit and realization of that goal, and the multitude of ways GO has been “meeting people where they are” to move the meter on jobs and justice. We hope you’ll be as excited about our progress as we are.

Kendra Penland
Interim Executive Director
a job makes all of the difference
TRAINING & PLACEMENT

The most critical step towards self-sufficiency is a reliable income.
That’s why the core goal of our training is to provide students with the hands-on skills and portable technical credentials necessary to find and retain employment. But these aren’t just any jobs: we focus on well-paying, sustained employment in jobs that increase community and environmental health. Our targeted curriculum prepares residents for growing industries like:

- Green Construction
- Urban Agriculture
- Building Science & Weatherization
- Sustainable Landscaping
- Culinary Arts

Service projects, community engagement, and social entrepreneurship are also key to our programs. Through these, residents not only hone their skills, but also leave GO armed with the tools they need to improve the environmental and social conditions in their very own communities.

During and after training participants have access to case management and job placement services that support them in reaching personal goals and overcoming systematic barriers to employment. Meanwhile, graduates who need extra on-the-job training experience have the opportunity to earn a living wage working with GO’s Labor Crew staffing service while they look for more permanent positions. This approach helps people break the cycle of poverty and increase overall community resilience.

Impact:

56 took training
77 technical certifications awarded
47 got permanent jobs or paid apprenticeships
27 worked in GO Labor Crew transitional jobs
$247,278 in wages earned in GO Labor Crew

Moving Forward
Our training programs are now operating out of the newly renovated Edington Education & Career Center. With a USDA-certified commercial kitchen and a state-of-the-art carpentry and learning lab, our graduates are being equipped with meaningful skills and hands-on experience like never before.
business with a mission
GO strives to achieve the triple bottom line: economic viability, social equity, and the environment. Nowhere is this commitment more profound than within our social enterprises. GO’s enterprises create jobs and provide hands-on training for residents while giving them critical resume-building work history. In the last two years alone, GO invested $375,000 towards business planning and development of five new enterprises that create jobs, give GO students real-world experience, and fulfill a social mission.

**Case Study: Great food. Better lives.**
One of our most exciting projects is the business incubation of urban agriculture enterprise Gardens United. Their mission is to provide quality, affordable, and healthy food and economic opportunity to the community. Gardens United grows fruits and vegetables in Pisgah View and Hillcrest Public Housing Developments using organic practices. Produce is sold at Farmer’s Tailgate Markets, restaurants, grocery retailers, and through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares.

While they create jobs and work towards economic independence, Gardens United is all about giving back. Whether it’s hosting cooking demonstrations, educating housing residents about healthy eating, or distributing food to public housing residents, they are proving that great food goes hand in hand with creating even better lives.

**Moving Forward**
We are thrilled to report that we’re expanding the social enterprise activities of our job training programs. In the next year, look out for hand-made products from our carpentry trainees and delicious meals and value-added food products prepared by the culinary program!
a place to call home
With your help, the Edington Center is becoming an innovative demonstration of community sustainability – one that will be an asset to the region for decades to come.

**SPOTLIGHT ON THE EDINGTON CENTER**

It’s been over two years since GO and its community partners broke ground on the renovation of the historic W.C. Reid Center. Since then, the construction itself has employed 50 local residents while the planning and engagement process breathed new life into the idea of community economic development as a solution to many longstanding injustices.

Today, the facility has been renamed as the Arthur R. Edington Education & Career Center. What was once a segregation-era school and then a community center is now growing into a hub of workforce development and sustainability resources, including:

- Job training and social enterprise incubation
- A community kitchen offering meals and space for creation of value added products
- On-site renewables, gardens, water catchment, and geothermal heating that save resources and serve as educational tools
- High school equivalency tutoring offered by AB Tech & Partners Unlimited
- Afterschool STEM services offered by UpFront Management Sports
- Community rooms by Southside Community Advisory Board
- Residents Council and resident services offered by Housing Authority of the City of Asheville

**Moving Forward**

We have the opportunity to create a long-term community asset that changes the conversation about the role the Southside community plays in the development of Asheville. With your support, it can be a place that both honors the history of the neighborhood while simultaneously improving community capacity for generations to come.
We believe that nonprofits can advocate as well as serve. While we work to prepare people for transitions out of poverty and joblessness, we also seek to address the social, economic and historical causes for those conditions.

While the Edington Center is a hub for our work, we also operate out in the surrounding neighborhoods. Building job skills is only part of the picture – real self-sufficiency and community empowerment takes outreach and capacity-building projects. That’s why a lot of our work involves hands-on sustainability projects, information sharing, novel cross-sector partnerships, and other activities that contribute to community and environmental health.

### 2014 HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Conferences and forums** on issues like inclusiveness in the environmental movement and strategies for avoiding gentrification
- **Healthy meals** that bring community members together while providing income for training students
- **Information kiosks** built by our students that display critical information on neighborhood opportunities
- **Planting days** that provide capacity for local community gardens and hands-on experience for students
RESOURCES

Income

- In-kind Goods & Services: $36,616 (2012-2013), $185,152 (2013-2014)

Expenses

- Community Engagement & Outreach: $94,030 (2012-2013), $95,975 (2013-2014)

87% of expenses go directly to client services

$3,200 invested for each client in our training programs
I’m a single father of five, raising three of those kids on my own. And when you’ve got a record that’s been following you from 20 years ago and a need to pay child support, it makes things difficult. The temptation of the past was to start hustling again and that’s an endless cycle that a lot of people get sucked into.

I came to GO Kitchen Ready because I wanted to break out of the cycle. I had some job skills, but what I learned at GO was really the people skills and how to interact with employers in a variety of work environments. I also really got to experience the feeling of finishing what you’ve started and that’s important.

Getting a certification in my field of work along with the other skills helped me to get a job at the French Broad Food Co-op in the deli and other places around the store. I really like the people and the friends I’ve been making there.
THANK YOU
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OUR MISSION:
Green Opportunities connects youth and adults from low-wealth neighborhoods to sustained employment opportunities that support families and improve community and environmental health.

WHO WE SERVE:
100% are low-income
37% lack high school diplomas or GEDs
35% lack work experience
66% have a criminal record

HOW YOU CAN HELP

GIVE: 87% of every dollar you give goes directly to client and community services
greenopportunities.org/donate

HIRE: Our graduates are motivated and trained to meet your company’s needs
greenopportunities.org/hire-us

VOLUNTEER: You make our work possible.
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